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ABSTRACT

This ERIC digest discusses the Education for Democratic Citizenship in Poland (EDCP) project, a cooperative effort of the Polish Ministry of National Education, the Mershon Center at The Ohio State University, and the Bureau for Civic Education in Local Control Schools at Warsaw, Poland. The digest discusses the background of the project, the project's original five major activities, and four new activities. Directors of and participants in the project are identified. A 7-item list of references and ERIC resources is included. The five original activities include: (1) a curriculum guide for civic education in Poland, funded by the National Endowment for Democracy; (2) a primary school civics course titled "Civic Education: Lesson Scenarios," funded by the United States Information Agency (USIA); (3) a course for pre-service teachers, "The School in Democratic Society" funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts; (4) a network of five centers for civic and economic education, funded by the National Endowment for Democracy; and (5) an international conference on civic education, funded by the Polish Ministry, Mershon, USIA, and the Pew Charitable Trusts. The four new activities are: (1) the Society for Civic Education; (2) a close-up look at Polish Politics and Government, "Civic Polonus"; (3) a book for educators and policymakers; and (4) research on civic education and democratization in Poland. (DK)

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by
Richard C. Remy

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Teaching Democracy in East Central Europe: The Case of Poland

by Richard C. Remy

The end of communism in East Central Europe has posed a challenge and an unprecedented opportunity for civic educators in the United States. As educational reformers in former communist countries have begun to build new civic education programs that will support democracy, they have turned, in part, to the United States for assistance in overcoming an imposing array of obstacles left by the long night of communist despotism. These obstacles include the lack of classroom instructional materials, teachers with little or no understanding of democracy and no training in appropriate pedagogical techniques, teacher educators who themselves are ill-equipped to teach about self-government, and educational administrators who have no professional training and little understanding of the implications of democracy for the operation of schools.

In response, some civic education projects involving cooperation among American and Central European educators are now underway in several countries in the region; more are needed. In Estonia, for example, the Jaan Tonisson Institute of Estonia and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems of the United States have been conducting seminars for teachers on core ideas of liberal constitutional democracy. In Hungary, civic educators from Syracuse University have been working with Hungarian colleagues on teacher training and curriculum-related activities.

One of the largest, most comprehensive projects is "Education for Democratic Citizenship in Poland" (EDCP), a cooperative effort of the Polish Ministry of National Education, the Mershon Center at The Ohio State University, and the Bureau for Civic Education in Local Control Schools at Warsaw, Poland. EDCP is often cited as a model of how to construct a long-term, multi-dimensional approach to civic education reform in the region. A closer look at EDCP provides some insights on what can be achieved and what American civic educators have to offer their colleagues in Central Europe.

Project Background. The EDCP Project began in February, 1991, when I visited Poland at the request of the Ministry of National Education to consult with officials and educators on a long-term plan for civic education. The plan we developed called for a set of distinct but related activities that would respond to specific, urgent problems identified by the Poles, such as the desperate need for new teaching materials. At the same time, we tried to design these specific activities so they would also contribute to several longer-term goals. These goals were to institutionalize civic education in all schools in Poland for the next decade, to contribute to a national dialogue among Polish educators on the meaning of democratic citizenship and civic education, and to build strong linkages between American and Polish civic educators.

After developing the plan, I returned to Poland in August, 1991 with OSU President Dr. E. Gordon Gee. We presented the Polish Minister of Education with a Proclamation pledging cooperation between Mershon and the Ministry on the project, Education for Democratic Citizenship in Poland. The Ministry made this project a priority and has covered most in-country expenses for Polish and American participants. For its part, the Mershon Center proceeded to secure American financial support for the EDCP Project from several U.S. government agencies and a private foundation, as noted below.

The Projects' Original Activities. The project on Education for Democratic Citizenship in Poland has carried out five major activities.

- **Curriculum Guide for Civic Education in Poland, funded by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED).** Twenty-five Polish educators working in Poland with American civic educators have developed a curriculum guide and support materials. The guide presents the rationale, goals, objectives, and content outlines for a primary school and secondary school civics curriculum. One supporting book presents 16 sample lesson plans illustrating topics and goals set forth in the curriculum guide. A second book consists of 36 readings on political life, citizenship, and human rights by prominent Polish social scientists and political activists. The readings provide background information on key topics set forth in the guide.
- **Primary School Civics Course, "Civic Education: Lesson Scenarios," funded by the United States Information Agency (USIA).** Polish educators in residence at the Mershon Center from September 1992 through February 1993 developed a civics course for Polish primary schools (grades 6-8) containing 82 lessons. Each lesson includes instructions for the teacher and materials for the students, such as case studies, decision trees, maps and charts, primary sources, and the like. The lessons are organized into seven units on such topics as "Principles of Democracy," "Human Rights and Freedoms," "The Free Market Economy," and "Poland and the World." The course has been approved by the Ministry of National Education as a replacement for previous courses.
- **Course for Pre-Service Teachers, "The School in Democratic Society," funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts.** Polish university professors in residence at the Mershon Center from September through December 1992 have prepared a detailed syllabus for a two-semester course on the principles of democracy as they apply to the organization and operation of schools. The syllabus is organized around seven topics including "Student Rights and Responsibilities," "Schools and the Local Community," and "The Role of Schools in a Democratic Society." The syllabus presents goals, detailed explanations, suggested

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readings, and sample teaching strategies for each topic.

• **A Network of Five Centers for Civic and Economic Education, funded by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED).** Five regional centers have been established in Warsaw, Gdansk, Krakow, Lublin, and Wroclaw. They are providing in-service training for teachers on the new civics course developed by the Project, creating libraries of resource materials, and conducting public education programs for children and adults.

• **International Conference on Civic Education, funded by the Polish Ministry, Mershon, USIA, and The Pew Charitable Trusts.** In December, 1993 prominent educators and scholars from across Poland met in Warsaw to critique and discuss the materials developed by the EDCP Project. Project materials were distributed. American civic educators participated as did representatives from non-governmental organizations and the ministries of education of Albania, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Romania, as well as a representative of the European Community.

Additional Activities Underway. Four new activities, not called for in the original plan for EDCP, have developed out of the original activities and are now underway.

• **Society for Civic Education, start-up funds from the Mershon Center.** Polish teachers are establishing a professional organization for primary and secondary school teachers and others interested in citizenship education. The new Polish Society for Civic Education plans to hold meetings, facilitate in-service training of teachers, sponsor instructional materials development projects, and so forth. In addition, the Society hopes to develop connections with similar organizations in other countries.

• **A Close-up Look at Polish Politics and Government - *Civis Polonus*, start-up funds from USIA and Mershon.** Polish educators have created a program that will annually bring students and their teachers from across Poland to Warsaw to meet government leaders and observe democratic political activities first-hand. A first for Poland, "Civis Polonus" (Polish Citizen), is modeled on programs like those conducted by the Close Up Foundation in the United States. The first program took place in July 1994 with students engaging in discussions with policymakers, visiting key institutions of national government, and participating in a simulation on the role of the Polish Senate.

• **A Book for Educators and Policymakers, start-up funds from the Mershon Center.** This book, *Civic Education for Democracy: Lessons from Poland*, will contain original essays, by Polish and American scholars and educators, analyzing the conceptual, educational, and policy implications of the EDCP project in light of the global democratic revolution. The book will contain chapters focused directly on the EDCP Project as well as chapters on issues related to teaching core ideas of constitutional democracy worldwide.

• **Research on Civic Education and Democratization in Poland, funded by the Mershon Center.** A multi-disciplinary team of Polish and American social scientists and educators have recently begun what is hoped will become a long-term civic education research program that will examine the impact of Polish efforts to establish new programs of citizenship education. Initial steps include analysis of existing Polish data sets on political socialization, the preparation of working papers on research methodology for assessing civic education, a small conference in Warsaw, and the preparation of case studies.

Directors and Participants. Dr. Richard C. Remy, the Mershon Center, and Dr. Jacek Strzemieczny, Director of the Bureau for Civic Education in Local Control Schools, co-direct the EDCP Project. Dr. Karimierz Slomczynski, Professor of Sociology at The Ohio State University and Warsaw University, and Dr. John J. Patrick, Professor of Education at Indiana University, serve as Chief Consultants.

In addition to teachers from across Poland, over 25 professors of education, political science, economics, philosophy, sociology, psychology, and history are involved in the Project. The institutions represented are The Ohio State University, Harvard University, University of Cincinnati, University of Maryland, Indiana University, Warsaw University, Krakow Higher Pedagogical Academy, and Jagiellonian University at Krakow.

References and ERIC Resources. The following list of resources includes references used to prepare this Digest. The items followed by an ED number are available in microfiche and/or paper copies from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). For information about prices, contact EDRS, 7420 Fullerton Road, Suite 110, Springfield, Virginia 22153-2842; telephone numbers are (703) 440-1440 and (800) 443-3742. Entries followed by an EJ number, annotated monthly in CURRENT INDEX TO JOURNALS IN EDUCATION (CIJE), are not available through EDRS. However, they can be located in the journal section of most larger libraries by using the bibliographic information provided, requested through Interlibrary Loan, or ordered from the UMI reprint service.

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